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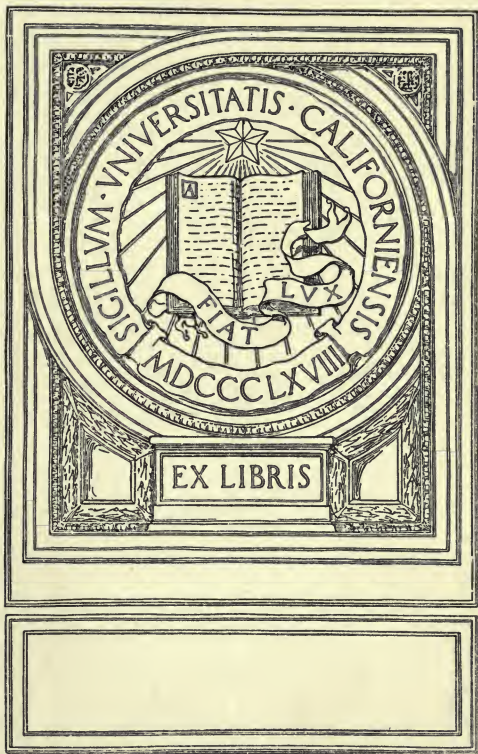
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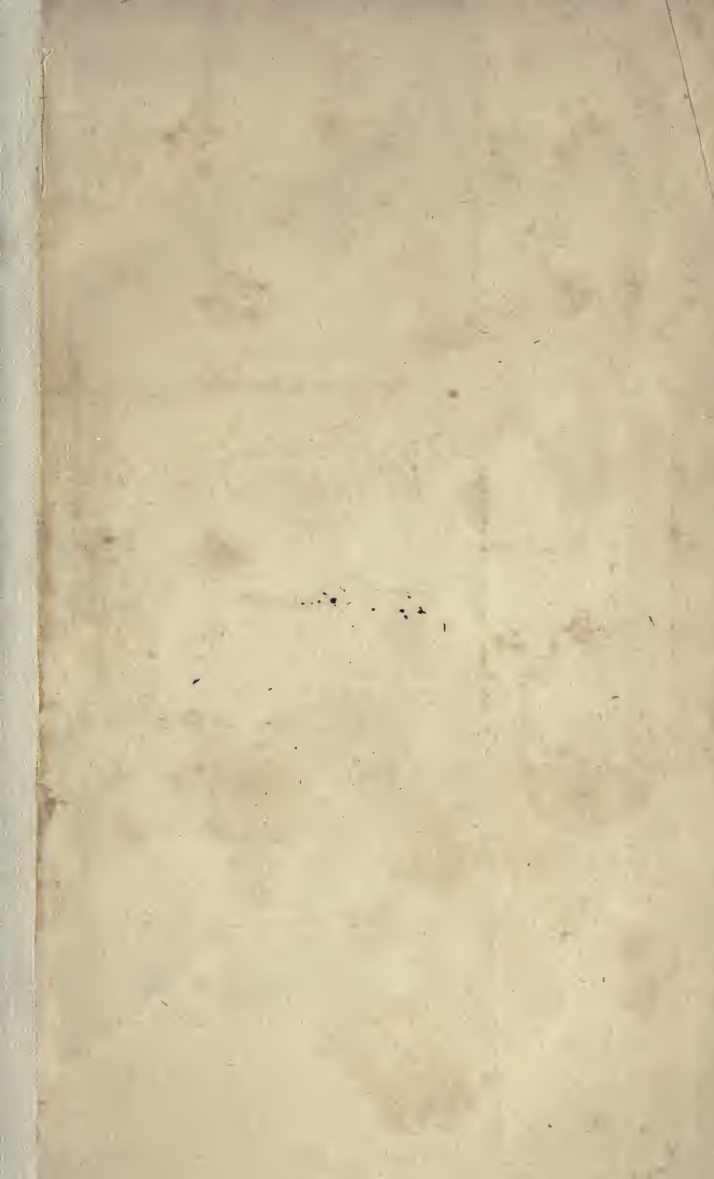
JOHN WOOLMAN

BY

DORA GREENWELL

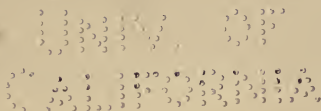
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JOHN WOOLMAN.



BY

DORA GREENWELL.



F. B. KITTO,

5, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT, LONDON, E.C.

1871.

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TO VIND
APPROVED

TO
JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,
THE DEFENDER OF AN OPPRESSED RACE,
THE ADVOCATE OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL FREEDOM,

Are Inscribed

THESE RECORDS OF A LIFE CONSECRATED TO THE
PRINCIPLES BY WHICH HIS OWN HAS BEEN GUIDED.

DURHAM,

May 18th, 1871.

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“There is a SPIRIT, which I *feel*, that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong ; but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it be betrayed it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness ; its life is everlasting love unfeigned, it takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it ; nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings—for with the world’s joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth ; who through death obtained this resurrection, and eternal holy life.”—JAMES NAYLOR, *when near the close of his life*.

JOHN WOOLMAN.

“To smell this flower come nearer ; such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.”

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

“THY name,” says the Bride in Canticles, “is as ointment poured forth,” and like ointment poured forth are the names and records of many of the Bridegroom's closest followers, who, standing near to Him, and rejoicing greatly because of His voice, have not been careful to concentrate their strength or sweetness. Their “record” was with the Lord, their work inseparably blent with His ; their lives were “poured forth” in humble, unmarked tasks, in offices of love, that once filled some chamber of the Master's goodly house “with the odour of the ointment ;” and the influence of such spirits, whether in life, or in the hallowed words through which being dead they yet speak to us, is like that of fragrance, something not to be defined or analysed, but subtle, communicative, stealing insensibly within our souls, and bearing them away “to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.”

There is a quietness about such lives ; a silence like that of the strong mountains, or of the calm,

illimitable heavens, where there is neither speech nor language, and yet *a voice is heard among them*. And while we commune with that voice we forget to ask whether it comes to us from the north or from the south, from the east or the west of our Lord's wide dominions; the language is that of one who hath been brought up in king's houses; pure, refined, and idiomatic, it bears upon it no local, no sectarian trace, and of those who have attained to it we can only say, "These men are Galileans, and their speech agreeth thereto."

"There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, when the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows they become brethren."

John Woolman, the writer of these words, was born in Northampton, Burlington County, West Jersey, U.S., in the year 1720. He was one of the people called Quakers, one of those "Friends" who have so often and so perseveringly "shown themselves friendly" to suffering, oppressed Humanity. He opens his journal of his life and ministry very simply.

"Before I was seven years old," he says, "I began to be acquainted with the working of Divine love. Through the care of my parents I was taught to read nearly as soon as I was capable of it, and as I went from school one day, I remember

that while my companions were playing by the way, I went forward out of sight, and sitting down, I read the 22d chapter of the Revelation: 'He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' In reading it my mind was drawn to seek after that pure habitation which I then believed God had prepared for His servants. The place where I sat, and the sweetness that attended my mind, remain fresh in my memory. This, and the like gracious visitations, had such an effect on me that when boys used ill-language it troubled me, and through the continued mercies of God I was preserved from that evil.

"About the twelfth year of my age, my father being abroad, my mother reproved me for some misconduct to which I made an undutiful reply. The next First-day, as I was returning with my father from meeting, he told me that he understood I had behaved amiss to my mother, and advised me to be more careful in future. I knew myself blameable, and in shame and confusion remained silent. Being thus awakened to a sense of my wickedness, I felt remorse in my mind, and on getting home I retired and prayed to the Lord to forgive me, and I do not remember that I ever afterwards spoke unhandsomely to either of my parents, however foolish in some other things."

"Sweet is the holiness of youth." Yet one other anecdote of his childhood, interesting as showing the native tenderness of the heart in which in

after days compassion was to spring up as a well whose waters fail not.

“On going to a neighbour’s house, I saw, on the way, a robin sitting on her nest, and as I came near she went off, but, having young ones, she flew about, and with many cries expressed her concern for them. I stood and threw stones at her, and one striking her she fell down dead. At first I was pleased with the exploit, but after a few minutes was seized with horror at having, in a sportive way, killed an innocent creature while she was careful for her young. I beheld her lying dead, and thought those young ones, for whom she was so careful, must now perish for want of their dam to nourish them. After some painful considerations, I climbed up the tree, took all the young birds and killed them, supposing that better than to leave them to pine away and die miserably. I then went on my errand, and for some hours could think of little else but the cruelties I had committed.”

“Heaven lies about us in our infancy,” but the passing out of childhood into youth is a transition ever full of danger. John Woolman speaks of this time as of a season in which, “while he was preserved from profane language or scandalous conduct, he yet perceived within himself a plant that produced many wild grapes.” He speaks of youthful vanities and diversions making serious reflections uneasy to him; of the Word of God, which is as a fire and a hammer, melting and breaking in

pieces a rebellious heart ; of deep contrition, of renewed engagements with heaven,—yet of repeated declension, “vanity being added to vanity, and repentance to repentance,” so that he tells us, writing in his thirty-sixth year, “While I meditate on the gulf towards which I then travelled, and reflect on my youthful disobedience, for these things I weep, mine eye runneth down with water.”

Yet the conflict, if a keen one, was soon over. “About the age of eighteen years,” he says, “I felt the judgments of God in my soul like a consuming fire. I was often sad, and longed to be delivered from these vanities. I resolved totally to leave off some of them, but for the more refined part of them there was a secret reserve in my heart ; my will was unsubjected, which rendered my labours fruitless, and for many months I had great troubles. At length, through the merciful continuance of Heavenly visitations, I was made to bow down in spirit before the Lord. One evening I had spent some time in reading a pious author and walking out alone ; I humbly prayed to the Lord for His help, that I might be delivered from the vanities which so ensnared me. Thus being brought low He helped me, and as I learned to bear the cross I felt refreshment to come from His presence. Yet though I had been thus strengthened, I still found myself in great danger, having many weaknesses attending me, and strong temptations to wrestle with, the sense of which greatly affecting me, I sought deserts and lonely places,

and there with tears did confess my sins to God, and humbly craved His help. And I may say with reverence, He was near me in my troubles, and in those times of humiliation opened my ear to discipline.

“I was now led to look seriously at the way by which I was drawn from the pure truth, and learned that if I would live such a life as the faithful servants of God lived, I must not go into company as heretofore in my own will, but all the cravings of sense must be governed by a divine principle. In times of sorrow and abasement these instructions were sealed upon me, and I felt the power of Christ prevail over selfish desires, so that I was now preserved in a good degree of steadiness.”

And never, surely, was that great transfer of allegiance—“the exchange of the will of man for a better one,” the passing out of self into Christ, the setting of the feet in a large room—more fitly, more sweetly described than in the following words:—
“I was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator, and learn to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men, but also toward the brute creatures; that as the mind is moved by an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible being, so by the same principle it was moved to love Him in all His manifestations in the visible world; that as by His breath the

flame of life was kindled in all animal sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by life derived from Him, was a contradiction in itself. I found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions, but believed that sincere, upright-hearted people in every society, who truly love God, were accepted of Him.

“As I lived under the Cross, and simply followed the openings of truth, my mind from day to day was more enlightened ; former acquaintances were left to judge of me as they would, for I found it safest for me to live in private, and to keep these things sealed up in my own breast. *While I silently ponder on the change wrought in me, I find no language equal to convey to another a clear idea of it :* I looked upon the works of God in this visible creation, and an awfulness covered me. My heart was tender, and often contrite, *and universal love to my fellow-creatures increased in me. This will be understood by such as have trodden the same path.* Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness. There is a harmony in the sound of that voice to which divine love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct whose passions are regulated ; yet these do not fully show forth that inward life to those who have not felt it ; this white stone and new name is only known rightly by such as receive it.”

A Latin proverb tells us that it is easier to paint a rose than to convey the sense of its odour; and it would be hard to give any idea of what this good man was, how calm, how strong, how child-like, were it not for the fragrance which still lingers among these records.

“As lives the flower’s quick spirit in the cell
It floods with sweetness, sweetness never knowing
Loss for the bounty of its overflowing.”

Here, as a flower pressed within the leaves of a book will leave there the clear outline of its form, with some faint tinge of its pervading colour, we find upon every page the impress of a soul listening, waiting—waiting to be directed, waiting even to be conducted; desiring to be guided by the eye, the hand, the voice of the Beloved; asking to be led from among the crowd, so that His voice may be heard more plainly, may be followed more implicitly; jealous of outward clamours that may drown it, of inward whispers that may stifle it; covetous of silence, of simplicity, fearing nothing so much as any strength or wisdom which comes not directly from above.

“I endeavoured,” he says, “to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the true Shepherd. One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting, but not keeping close to the divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks. I remembered God and was troubled, and in the

depth of my distress He had pity upon me, and sent the Comforter ; my mind became calm and quiet. About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of divine love opened and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the Cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, *until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet through which the Lord speaks to His flock.*"

In these last words, and in many which follow them, we find as it were the key to much which has set a characteristic stamp upon the annals of the religious community to which John Woolman belonged. Here we see the axe laid to the root of the human will ; its movements, even when most visibly tending towards good, are suspected, checked, brought under captivity. To follow natural impulse is but to walk by the light of the sparks which self has kindled ; and strange fire, even though it be the flame of zeal and eloquence, at which many may be warmed and enlightened, must not be laid upon the altar of the Lord. He desires a pure offering ; obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken to Him, to wait for the leading of the still small voice is better than whole burnt-offerings and oblations. "I kept silence," says the Psalmist, "even from good words." "I be-

came dumb," says the Prophet, "and opened not my mouth, because it was thy doing." These journals speak to us continually of "instructions sealed upon the heart;" of deep inward exercises experienced for others; "concerns," prompting to perilous undertakings, to labours "in that which is mortifying to the creaturely will;" of bowings of the spirit before the Lord; of compelled silences, of the springs of the ministry kept low. And again, from time to time, of fresh visitations, of a heart enlarged, a mouth opened even "like the raising of the gate in a water-course when a weight of water lay upon it."

"Christ puts forth His ministers, *and goeth before them*, and oh! how great is the danger of departing from the pure feeling of that which leadeth safely. *That which is of God gathers to God.* The necessity of an inward stillness hath, under deep exercises, appeared clear to my mind. In true silence strength is renewed, and the mind being weaned from all things, except as they may be enjoyed in the Divine will, the pure light shines within the soul. And as my mind hath been thus exercised, I have seen that to be active and busy in the Church without the leading of the Holy Spirit is not only unprofitable, but tends to increase dimness. I have frequently found a necessity to stand up, when the spring of the ministry was low, and to speak from necessity, in that which subjecteth the will of the creature; and herein I was united with the suffering seed, and found inward

sweetness in these mortifying labours, and under these dispensations enlargement hath followed, and the power of truth risen higher than I ever knew it before through me. While aught remains in us contrary to a perfect resignation of our wills, it is like a seal to a book wherein is written 'that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,' concerning us. (Rom. xii. 2.) *But when our minds entirely yield to Christ, that silence is known which followed the opening of the last of the seals.* (Rev. viii. 1.) In this silence we learn to abide in the Divine will, and to feel that *we have no cause to promote except that alone in which the light of God directs us.*"

There is something sublime in the passivity of the early Quakers; unresisting and yet persisting, they are at the same time "reeds shaken by the wind," * "and prophets, yea, and more than prophets," not only testifying, but witnessing to great evangelic truths, which had not in their day found acceptance in the general Church.

Guizot speaks of the mild obstinacy of the Quaker; and in reading their history we cannot but admire the constancy which made them, both

* Ah, Lord, since in Thy hands the most feeble things gain power and strength, and a reed placed within them becomes a sceptre, take Thou my heart; it is but a reed, flexible and versatile, turning with every wind; a hollow reed, empty of charity, of devotion, empty of all good. But from the moment it is placed in Thy hands it will be filled with the grace and strength of thy Divine Spirit, and will become a generous heart, a firm heart, an ardent and fervent heart, ready to surmount all difficulties, and to make all obstacles give way before its indefatigable perseverance.—ST. BERNARD.

in England and America, the living epistles of religious toleration to an age which was slow to receive that righteous message, known though it be now, and commended of all men. Few things since the days of primitive Christianity are more lovely, more affecting, than many of the scenes their annals disclose. We see the kings of the earth standing up, and its rulers taking counsel together against a people whose strength is literally "to sit still;" a people whose only weapons are silence, endurance, and reliance on an unseen Guide, and yet who, in the might of these, confront and finally confound the strong things of the world drawn up in order against them. *A feeble people*, but as it has been truly said, *one whose dwelling-place is in the Rock*, one whose strength has, like that of Samson, its own secret. When the heart has ceased to confer with flesh and blood, to consult its own desires and impulses; when it has ceased from its own works as God did from His, its Sabbath is nigh at hand, that Sabbath of united activity and rest after which every Christian soul yearns. Yet before this Sabbath can be entered upon, there is a death either sudden or gradual to be endured, there is a binding, a spoiling of the strong man, a taking from him of his armour wherein he trusteth, before the stronger than he can enter and possess himself of these goods in peace. Oh! how fair, how fruitful, is the life of simplicity, the life in which it is God's will, *howsoever revealed to us*, which is alone desired, alone rejoiced in; a life

whose principle is not constraint, but liberty—the freedom of a spirit that loves the rule under which it lives.

“ Happy that happy chain ; its links are heavenly,
*There is no blessedness but in such bondage,
Sure it is sweeter far than liberty.*”

I will *run*, saith the Psalmist, in the way of Thy testimonies, when thou hast set my heart at liberty. My soul will move swiftly, move surely, when Thou dost no longer govern it after the law of a carnal commandment, but live in it after the power of an endless life ! Yet must this freedom be obtained with a great sum.

The writings now before us testify to keen separations, deep and afflictive baptisms. There is something peculiarly touching in the simplicity with which John Woolman relates his calling to the ministry, and the “weighty exercise” to which that office introduced him. Naturally, it is evident he is of the number of those in whose mouth are no reproofs—who would gladly be both deaf and blind, as the Lord’s servant is sometimes called upon to become. Yet he finds himself set for a watchman, an admonisher, one who like Ezekiel is constrained to deliver in that which is bitter and distasteful to nature, the very message which when he himself received it from God was “within his mouth as honey for sweetness.”

“And now,” he says, “as I had experienced the love of God through Jesus Christ, to redeem me from many pollutions, and to be a succour to me

through a sea of conflicts with which no person was fully acquainted, and as my heart was often enlarged in this heavenly principle, I felt a tender compassion for the youth who remained entangled in snares like those which had entangled me. This love and tenderness increased, and my mind was strongly engaged for the good of my fellow-creatures.

“All the faithful are not called to the public ministry; but those who are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of worship are various, but wherever any are true ministers of Jesus Christ, it is from the operation of His Spirit upon their hearts, *first purifying them, and thus giving them a just sense of the conditions of others.*” . . . He goes on to tell us of how, “about the time called Christmas,” he observed many people spending their time in drinking and vain sports, tending to corrupt one another; of one house in particular, in which there is much disorder. He thinks it his duty to speak to the master of it, but considers that he is young, *and that several elderly friends in town have opportunity to see these things.* Still he cannot feel his mind clear. “With prayers and tears I besought the Lord for His assistance, and He, in loving-kindness, gave me a resigned heart. At a suitable opportunity I went to the public-house, and, seeing the man amongst much company, I called him aside, and in the fear and dread of the Almighty, expressed to him what rested on

my mind. He took it kindly, and afterwards showed more regard to me than before. In a few years he died in middle life ; and I often thought, that had I neglected my duty in that case, it would have given me great trouble."

He next relates how he was desired by his employer to write out a bill of sale for a negro woman, the man being waiting who bought her. "The thing was sudden, and though I felt uneasy at the thoughts of writing out an instrument of slavery for one of my fellow-creatures, yet I remembered that I was hired by the year, that it was my master who directed me to do it, and it was an elderly man, a member of our Society, who bought her. So through weakness I gave way and wrote it, yet in the executing of it I was afflicted in my mind, and as often as I reflected seriously upon the matter, I thought I should have been clearer, if I had desired to be excused from it as a thing against my conscience ; for such it was. Some time after this, a young man of our Society asked me to write a conveyance of a slave to him, he having lately taken a negro into his house. I told him, in good will, that I was not easy to write it, believing the keeping of slaves, although practised by many in our meeting, and in other places, to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion ; therefore I desired to be excused from the transaction."

Writing some time afterwards, he says, "I saw at this time, that if I was honest in declaring that which truth opened to me, I could not please all

men, and I laboured to be content in the way of my duty, however disagreeable to my own inclination. Through the humbling dispensations of Divine providence, men are sometimes fitted for God's service. The messages of the Prophet Jeremiah were so disagreeable to the people, and so adverse to the spirit they lived in, that he became the object of their reproach ; and in the weakness of nature, he thought of desisting from his prophetic office. 'But,' saith he, 'his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones ; and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay.'

"Thou who sometimes travellest in the work of the ministry, and art made very welcome by thy friends, seest many tokens of their satisfaction in having thee for their guest. It is good for thee to dwell deep, that thou mayest feel and understand the spirits of people, and take heed that their kindness, their freedom, and their affability, do not hinder us from the Lord's work. I have experienced that in the midst of kindness and smooth conduct, to speak close and home to those who entertain us, is hard labour. Sometimes when I have felt truth lead towards it, I have found myself disqualified by a superficial friendship ; and as the sense thereof hath abased me, and my cries have been to the Lord, so have I been humbled and made content to appear weak, or as a fool for His sake, and thus a door hath been opened to enter upon it. To attempt to do the Lord's work in our

own way, and to speak of that which is the burden of the word in a way easy to the natural part of us, doth not reach to the bottom of the disorder. *The office of a minister of Christ is weighty*; and they who now go forth as watchmen, have need to be steadily on their guard against the snares of prosperity and an outside friendship."

II.

Arnold distinguishes between the *grace* of faith, that by which the soul lives unto God, and without which it cannot live at all, from the *gift* of faith, the faith able to remove mountains; the energy, heaven-impelled and heaven-compelling, through which men, even as princes, have had power with God, and have prevailed. The one, in a greater or less degree, is the attribute of every believer; the other is, in its very nature, extraordinary, singular, a gift communicated and communicative—imparted to especial individuals for especial ends. John Woolman's gift was love—a charity the extent of which it does not enter into the natural heart of man to conceive, and of which the more ordinary experiences, even of renewed nature, give but a faint shadow. Every now and then, in this world's history, we meet with men, the kings and priests of Humanity, on whose heads this precious ointment has been so poured forth, that it has run down to the skirts of their clothing, and

extended over the whole of the visible creation ; * men who have entered, like Francis of Assissi, into the secret of that deep amity with God and with His creatures, which makes man to be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field to be at peace with him. In this pure, universal charity, there is nothing fitful or intermittent, nothing that comes and goes in showers and gleams and sunbursts. Its springs are deep and constant, its rising is like that of a mighty river, its very overflow calm and steady, leaving life and fertility behind it. This love, like Him who was on earth its great Exemplar, is no respecter of persons. God hath showed it that it must call no man common or unclean ; it knows no distinction of great or little duties, of honourable or humiliating tasks ; it is among us as one who serves.

A Christian's glory, like his warfare, is within. The records of this good man's life are very uniform, with few incidents, except such as are

* Now it happened on a time that there came to Guthlac, a venerable brother, whose name was Wilfrith, who had of old been united to him in spiritual fellowship. Whilst they discoursed of their spiritual life, there came suddenly two swallows flying in, and behold they raised up their song rejoicing, and after that they sat fearlessly on Guthlac's shoulders, and then lifted up their song ; and afterwards they sat on his bosom, and on his arms and his knees. When Wilfrith had long wondering beheld the birds, he asked him wherefore the wild birds of the waste sat so submissively upon him ? But Guthlac answered him and said, " Hast thou never learnt, brother Wilfrid, in holy writ, that he who hath led his life after God's will, the wild beasts and the wild birds have become intimate with him ? "—GOODWIN'S *Life of St. Guthlac*.

connected with his repeated ministerial journeyings. There is a characteristic simplicity in the way in which he tells us how he changed his first occupation, that of assistant to a shopkeeper for the calling of a tailor, "thinking that I might by this business, and a little retailing of goods, get a living in a plain way, without the load of great business. I was taught to be content with this way of life, though I felt at times a disposition that would have sought for something greater ; *but through the revelation of Jesus Christ, I had seen the happiness of humility, and there was an earnest desire in me to enter deeply into it.* At times this desire arose to a degree of fervent supplication, wherein my soul was so environed with heavenly light and consolation, that things were made easy to me which might have been otherwise."

Ten years later, though in the meantime he has married and has now children, he tells us how the increase of business "became his burden."

"I had begun with selling trimmings for garments, and thence proceeded to cloths and linens, and at length having got a considerable shop of goods, the way to a large business appeared open ; *but I felt a stop in my mind.*

"I had learned to be content with a plain way of living. I had but a small family, and, on serious consideration, believed truth did not require me to engage much in cumbersome affairs. It had been my general practice to buy and sell things really useful. Things that chiefly pleased the vain mind

in people, I was not easy to trade in. I seldom did it, and whenever I did I found it weaken me as a Christian.

“Yet my natural inclination being towards merchandise, there was now a strife in my mind ; and in this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me, and gave me a heart resigned to His holy will. Then I lessened my outward business, and as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intentions, that they might consider what shop to turn to ; and in a while I wholly laid down merchandise, and followed my trade of tailor by myself, having no apprentice. I had also a nursery of apple-trees, in which I employed some of my time in hoeing, grafting, and trimming. It being the custom to sell chiefly on credit, poor people often get in debt, and not having wherewith to pay when payment is expected, they are often sued for it at law. Having frequently observed this, *I found it good for me to advise poor people to take such goods as were most useful and not costly.*”

“If thine eye be single,” saith our Divine Teacher, “thy whole body shall be full of light.” This simple-hearted man seems very early to have appreciated the great truth to which his whole way of life, together with his spoken and written discourses, bore one unceasing, consistent testimony, that “every degree of luxury has some connection with evil ;” and few, even among Christian thinkers, seem to have seen, in so strong and clear a light as

he did, its vital and sure connection not only with inward poverty and spiritual decay, but with injustice, with oppression, with the laying-on of unequal burdens, with all those things which make the poor of the land to sigh. It has been truly said, that one-half of the world does not know (nor *care*, it might be added) how the other half lives ; but is not this ignorance, with the cruel indifference it is founded upon, itself a grievous fault, and one for which the professing members of Christ's Church will have to answer grievously ? Lazarus is at the gate, naked, hungry, and full of sores. Dives does not know that he is there, and why ? Because he is himself clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day.

“When,” says John Woolman, “I have beheld plenty in some houses to a degree of luxury, the condition of poor children who are brought up without learning, and the weakly and aged who strive to live by their labour, have often revived in my mind ; and of this, some who live in fulness require to be put in remembrance. Weakly persons in the field and in the shops, and women who spin and knit in the manufactories, in performing what is esteemed a day's labour by the strong and healthy, often experience much weariness ; and many sighs, I believe, are uttered in secret, unheard by some who might ease their burdens. The hardships of the poor are sometimes increased through want of more agreeable nourishment, more plentiful fuel, and warmer clothing in the winter

than their wages will procure. People may have no intention to oppress, yet by entering on expensive ways of life, *their minds may be so entangled and so engaged to support vain, expensive customs, as to be estranged from the pure, sympathising spirit.*"

"One person," he says, speaking of the almost universal conformity to certain customs, "continuing to live contrary to true wisdom, commonly draws others into connection with him, and when these embrace the way the first hath chosen, their proceedings are like a wild vine, which, springing from a single seed and growing strong, its branches extend, and their little tendrils twist round all herbs and boughs of trees within their reach, and are so braced and locked in, that without much labour and great strength they are not disentangled." "Yet, as I have," he adds, "through Divine goodness found that *there is a more quiet, calm, and happy way intended for us to walk in*, I am engaged to express what I feel in my heart concerning it."

And there are some persons surely in our present day, given up though it be to "comfort" (a word which, truly interpreted, means only luxury made easy and made habitual), who will be ready to join him in this testimony; a few among us, at least, who have found in "plain living and high thinking" a more excellent way than that which is choked up and over-run with trifling yet heart-consuming cares about things which, as a great writer of our age says, "never yet made, nor had it

in their power to make, any one human being happier, wiser, healthier, or even better-looking!" Excessive decoration in dress and furniture, unnecessary servants, costly equipages, expensive entertainments,—these are surely of the things which perish in the using, and which even in the using impart but little real pleasure, vanity in life, as in Scripture, being inseparably linked with vexation of spirit,—yet these are the things which eat the heart out of true hospitality, which so crowd the life with elaborate littlenesses, as to leave small margin, either in time or money, for charity, or for those refined generosities which the liberal soul delights to devise and execute. How much is there in the aspect of the times we live in to make us in love with the "pleasures which go into small room," the simple, kindly, rational pleasures, which cheer and refresh the heart, and leave it freer and abler for life's duties, those great realities too often sacrificed for its "appearances," and that body and soul-wearying effort "to keep up a position," to which we owe so many blighted families, desolated homes, and dishonoured graves. "He who maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." We have still evil deities among us, demanding costly and incessant sacrifices, and first among these is Luxury, hard under its apparent softness, and cruel in its very smiling. The first Babel was a place of oppression, its founder a mighty hunter before the Lord, a tyrant whose game was men. The last Babylon is a place of merchandise, a

mighty city full of all manner of precious vessels, of odours, of purple, of silk and scarlet, of horses and chariots, and *slaves and souls of men*, and these two cities are one, and their name is alike "confusion." The sin of the first was self-exaltation against God—"Let us build a tower that shall reach unto heaven;" the sin of the second is self-isolation, a withdrawing of the heart from sympathy with man—"She hath glorified herself, she hath lived deliciously; she sayeth in her heart, I sit a queen, *and shall see no sorrow.*"

Yet Babylon the Great, even as Babel of old, is fallen, is fallen; her doom is already pronounced, the decree gone forth against pride and selfishness and oppression: "Come out of her, my people, be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues."

This subject is one to which the journals recur again and again. "Universal love," he says, "reconciles the mind to a life so plain, that a little doth suffice to support it, *a life of simplicity and sufficiency when the real comforts of life are not lessened.*" While "costly and cumbersome" ways of living, involving unnecessary labour, and entailing expenses that lead to covetousness and oppression, are, in John Woolman's eyes, the spots upon the leopard's skin; their beauty rather indicating than disguising the strength of cruelty they cover.

"About this time," he says, being in 1757 on a ministerial journey through the southern provinces, "a deep and painful exercise came upon me. As

the people here live much on the labour of slaves, many of whom are used hardly, and it is common for friends, on such visits, to have entertainment free of cost, a difficulty arose in my mind with respect to saving my money by kindness received from what appeared to me to be the gain of oppression." He meets this difficulty in his usual singleness and simplicity. "When I expected soon to leave a friend's house where I had entertainment, if I believed that I should not keep clear from the gain of oppression without leaving money, I spoke to one of the heads of the family privately, and desired them to accept of these pieces of silver, and give them to such of their negroes as they believed would make the best use of them ; at other times I gave them to the negroes myself, as the way looked clearest to me. Before I came out on my journey I had provided myself for this purpose with a large number of small pieces ; and thus offering them to some who appeared wealthy people, was a trial both to me and to them."

As he proceeds upon his journey he says, "The sense I had of the state of the Churches, brought a weight of distress upon me. The gold appeared to me to be dim, and the fine gold changed. It seemed to me, that through the prevailing of the spirit of this world, the minds of many were brought to an inward desolation. . . .

"Our conduct in some parts of this newly-settled land of America towards the negroes, hath deeply bowed my spirit, and though briefly to

relate how these people are treated is no agreeable work, yet after often reading over the notes I made as I travelled, I find my mind engaged to preserve them. Many of the white people in these provinces take little or no care of negro marriages, and when negroes marry after their own way, some make so little account of those marriages, that from views of interest, they often part men from their wives by selling them far asunder, which is common when estates are sold by executors at vendue. Many whose labour is heavy, being followed at their business in the field by a man with a whip, hired for that purpose, have in common little else allowed but one peck of Indian corn and some salt, for one week, with a few potatoes ; the potatoes they commonly raise by their labour on the first day of the week. The correction ensuing on their slothfulness or disobedience to overseers is often very severe, and sometimes desperate.

“Men and women have many times scarcely clothes sufficient to hide their nakedness, and boys and girls, ten or twelve years old, are often quite naked amongst their master’s children. Some of our Society use some endeavours to instruct their slaves in reading ; *but in common this is not only neglected but disapproved.* Yet these are the people by whose labour the other inhabitants are in a great measure supported, and many of them in the luxuries of life. These are the people who have made no agreement to serve us, and who have, in

no way that we know of, justly forfeited their liberty. These are the souls for whom Christ died, and for our conduct towards whom we must answer before Him who is no respecter of persons.

“There is a natural love; and when a parent beholds his child in misery, he hath a feeling of his affliction, *but in Divine love the heart is enlarged toward mankind universally*, and prepared to sympathise with strangers. Of this the Prophet seems to have had a feeling when he said, ‘Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?’ (Mal. ii. 10.) The blacks seem far from being our kinsfolk; they have neither honours, riches, nor power; their dress is coarse and often ragged; they have little or nothing at command, but must wait and work for others to obtain the necessaries of life, so that in their present situation there is not much to engage the friendship or move the affection of selfish men. Yet the Lord, in the riches of His goodness, is leading some into the feeling of the condition of this people, who cannot rest without labouring as their advocates; of which I in some measure have had experience, for in the movings of His love in my heart, these poor sufferers have been brought near to me.

“Many lives have been shortened through extreme oppression, in labouring to support luxury and worldly greatness. I have often myself been a witness to the sufferings of the aged and infirm,

made to labour too hard, and kept on a diet less comfortable than their state requires, and under the heart-melting influence of Divine love, *their misery hath felt to me like the misery of my parents.* Innocent youths are taken by violence from their friends and native land, and put on board ships with hearts laden with sorrow; exposed to great hardships at sea, and placed under people where their lives are attended with great provocations to anger and revenge; *with the condition of these youths my mind hath often been affected, as with the afflictions of my children.*

“Again, there are weaknesses sometimes attending us which make little or no alteration in our countenances, nor much lessen our appetite for food, and yet so affect us as to make labour very uneasy; in such cases, masters intent on putting forward business, and jealous of the sincerity of their slaves, may disbelieve what they say, and grievously afflict them. *These things being closely considered as happening to a near friend, will appear to be hard and painful.*

“Our children breaking a bone, getting so bruised that a leg or an arm must be taken off; lost for a few hours, so that we despair of their being found again; a friend hurt so that he dieth in a day or two,—these things move us with grief. It hath been computed that near one hundred thousand negroes have of late years been annually taken from the African coast by ships employed in the English trade. In procuring these slaves many

children are stolen privately ; wars are also encouraged among the negroes ; *but all is at a great distance*. Many groans arise from dying men which we hear not. Many cries are uttered by widows and fatherless children which reach not our ears. Many cheeks are wet with tears, and faces sad with unutterable grief, which we see not. Cruel tyranny is encouraged ! The hands of robbers are strengthened, and thousands reduced to abject misery who never injured us. In a feeling of the misery of these people, and of that great offence which is ministered to them, my tears have often been poured out before the Lord. And often under the sense of a deep revolt, and an overflowing stream of unrighteousness, my life has been a life of mourning, and tender desires are raised in me, that the nature of these practices may be laid to heart."

There is surely a deep pathos in these words, "*These things being closely considered as happening to a near friend, will appear to be hard and painful.*" Sympathy knits up the ancient bond of humanity, and draws all that belong to it into a nearness with each other. And while selfishness, even of that kind which commonly passes for affection, contracts feeling, concentrating it upon a few objects, and those of a personal kind, upon which it closes with a spring like that of the sensitive plant, charity takes of those very interests, "the things of a man," the strength and tenacity of individual affection, and through these instructs the heart in the

things of God, that pure universal love which can stretch forth its arms towards the whole human family, and say, "Behold my mother and my brethren!"

John Woolman's spirit seems to have been deeply initiated in that great mystery, the unity of our race in Adam as well as in Christ, and in the consequent impossibility of any one branch of it rightly flourishing through injustice exercised upon another. If one member suffer, the rest *must* suffer with it, though the blight be not at once apparent. The life of the social body is an organic life, and the canker will gradually work through the whole of what, for good or evil, is one. "*The state of mankind was harmonious in the beginning, and though sin hath introduced discord, yet, through the wonderful love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, the way is open for our redemption, and means are appointed to restore us to primitive harmony: so that if any one suffer by the unfaithfulness of another, the mind, the most noble part of him that occasions the discord, is thereby alienated from its true and real happiness.*"

"Whoever rightly advocates the cause of some, thereby promotes the good of all." Such are the words of this poor wise man, one of those whose wisdom, speaking in quietness, in example, and in prayer, has so often saved our earthly city in its extremity. Even then, writing in 1757, more than a hundred years ago, he saw plainly that the slaves "look like a burdensome stone to such as burden

themselves with them," and foresaw "that if the white people retain a resolution to prefer these outward prospects of gain to all other considerations, and do not act conscientiously toward them as fellow-creatures, that that burden would grow heavier and heavier, until times change in a way disagreeable to us.

"God will with terrible things answer us in righteousness in this matter. I feel in that which is immutable, that the seeds of great calamity and desolation are sown and growing fast in this great continent. Nor have I words sufficient to set forth the longing I feel, that we (His own people) who are placed along the coast, and have tasted the love and goodness of God, might arise in the strength thereof, and, like faithful messengers, labour to check the growth of these seeds, that they may not ripen to the ruin of our posterity."

Yet his spirit was too large and tolerant not to be open to the real difficulties which then, as now, beset the removal of an evil so built up within the social fabric of a great country, that it may be literally said concerning it, "that the stone cries out of the wall, and the timber of the beam witnesses against it." He advises such as would clear themselves of this inheritance of guilt and woe, "not to wait for some extraordinary means to bring about their deliverance; *if such set aside self-interest when truth requires the contrary*, I believe a way will so open that they will know how to steer through all difficulties."

To one who, in support of the slave-trade, argues that the blacks are the offspring of Cain, and their blackness the mark which God set upon him, he replies with quiet good sense, that Noah and his family were all who according to Scripture survived the flood, and that as Noah was of Seth's race the family of Cain was wholly destroyed. But when the argument is continued, to the effect that after the flood Ham went to the land of Nod, and took a wife, that Nod was a land far distant, inhabited by Cain's race, and that the flood did not reach it, and Ham being sentenced to be a servant of servants to his brethren, these two families being thus joined, were undoubtedly fit only for slaves,—“I was troubled,” he says, “to perceive the darkness of their imaginations, and in some pressure of spirit said, ‘the love of ease and gain are the motives in general of keeping slaves, and men are wont to take hold of weak arguments to support a cause which is unreasonable.’”

Touching on the faults commonly imputed to slaves, their childishness, ignorance, and want of truth, he exclaims, after dwelling at some length on their depressed, down-trodden condition, and on the unlikelihood of improvement taking place in the absence of every stimulating motive, every elevating hope, “If oppression be so hard to bear that a wise man is made mad by it (Eccles. vii. 7), we may reasonably expect that a series of it would alter the behaviour and manners of a people.”

The cause of this people was now his own; again

and again, as opportunity serves, we find him pressing it home to the minds of such "serious and thoughtful people" as have already experienced secret misgivings on the subject; admonishing those who are still careless, and indefatigably keeping it before the general Society of Friends in weighty and searching conferences and inquiries, from which, and from his written addresses, "plain and loving considerations on the keeping of negroes," sent forth from time to time, great practical good appears to have arisen. He speaks of private visits to friends of note who kept slaves, of "shynesses" arising in consequence of the admonitions he was constrained to utter, of heavy exercises, mortifying labours, and meetings in which he was almost alone under this great burden; but afterwards he has more cheering things to tell. A "concern" with regard to slavery is awakened, the subject becomes generally and closely entered upon—recommendations are inserted in the yearly letters "that Friends should labour against the buying and keeping of slaves," desire manifests itself that the Society, as such, should put away the accursed thing from among its dwellings, and John Woolman's spirit for all these things is "humbly bowed in thankfulness."

The springs of all this outward activity, meanwhile, lay far below the surface. His own spirit dwelt deep. Even amid the comforts of his family and his home, his heart is often as that "of a sojourner," and during long and toilsome and

perilous journeys, undertaken on foot, under great bodily weakness and severe inward discouragement, he enters into "a lively feeling of the state of the oppressed." "In awful retiredness" he tells us, "my mind was gathered inward to the Lord, humbly desiring that in true resignation I might receive instruction from Him respecting my duty among this people. This was a journey of much inward wailing, and as my eye was toward the Lord, a way was several times opened to my humbling admiration when things appeared very difficult. On my return I felt a very comfortable relief of mind, having through Divine help laboured in much plainness, both with friends selected, and in the more public meetings. At one of these I had to express, with much plainness, my feelings respecting Friends living in fulness on the labours of the poor oppressed negroes. At this time the sufferings of Christ, and His tasting death for every man, the travels, sufferings, and martyrdoms of the apostles and primitive Christians, in labouring for the conversion of the Gentiles, were livingly revived in me ; the difference between the treatment which these Gentiles, the negroes, receive at our hands, and the labours of the primitive Christians for the conversion of the heathen world, was pressed home, and the power of truth came over us ; and of this visit I may say with thankfulness that it appeared like a tendering visitation in most places."

III.

“In a time of sickness with the pleurisy, a little more than two years and a half ago,” writes John Woolman, being now in England, not long before his death, “I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of a dull gloomy colour, between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours, I then heard a soft, melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had ever heard with my ears before ; I believed it was the voice of an angel who spake to the other angels ; the words were—‘John Woolman is dead.’ I soon remembered that I was once John Woolman, and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean.

“I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and I heard them blaspheme the name of Christ, *at which I was grieved, for His name to me was precious.* I was then informed that these heathen were told, that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ ; and they said among themselves, ‘If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant.’

“ All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery, and in the morning, my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was ; and they, telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed ; for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to any one, but was very desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery.

“ My tongue was often so dry that I could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture ; and as I lay still for a time, I at length felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and I then said, ‘ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’ Then the mystery was opened, and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language, ‘ John Woolman is dead,’ meant no more than the death of my own will.

“ My natural understanding returned as before, and I saw that people setting off their tables with silver vessels at entertainments was often stained with worldly glory, and that in the present state of things, I should take heed how I fed myself out of such vessels. Going to our monthly meeting soon after my recovery, I dined at a friend’s house where drink was brought in silver vessels, and not in any other. Wanting something to drink, I told

him my case with weeping, and he ordered some drink for me in another vessel.

“After this sickness, I spake not in public meetings for worship for nearly one year ; but my mind was often in company with the oppressed slaves as I sat in meetings ; and though under this dispensation I was shut up from speaking, yet the spring of the gospel ministry was many times livingly opened in me, and the divine gift operated by abundance of weeping, in feeling the oppression of this people.”

“Mysteries are revealed to the meek.” This singular and affecting dream connects itself with a truth which lies near the heart of all deep Christian experience, that fellowship with the Father and with the Son, which draws the soul into a steadfast union with Humanity, even in withdrawing it from the hollow and apparent amity which goes so far to make up the friendship of this world. Jesus, the friend of sinners, is emphatically spoken of by His apostle as being “separate from sinners and undefiled.” And it is this very separation, the dignity and purity of Christ, that which, surrounding Him like an atmosphere, impalpable yet impenetrable,* “parts Him from us in the very act of embrace,” which so irresistibly attracts the soul to Him.

John Woolman was one who had entered into the spirit of his Master’s words, “Except a corn of

* See on this great subject the chapter in Bushnell’s *New Life*, headed, “Christ as separate from the world.”

wheat die, it abideth alone." His gentle spirit had drunk deep into the severity as well as into the goodness of his beloved Lord, and had learned what is that "necessary death" of the human will unto which those who would rise with Christ in newness of life must become obedient, "*even the death of the cross.*" Under its broad shadow, this meek, self-denying servant of his crucified Master, sat down with great delight, and found its fruit—the fruit of patience, of sacrifice, of subjection—"pleasant to his taste." Into *this* joy, the peculiar chosen joy of his Lord, his spirit entered and abode. "Knowing well that it belongs to Love of ancient right to suffer, and that none but a sufferer can woo her well, he entered into the school of afflictions ;" * for "Christ," he says, "endured afflictions in a body prepared by the Father, *but the afflictions of His mystical body are not yet finished ; for they who are baptised unto Christ are baptised unto His death.* And as, abiding humbly under His sanctifying power, we are brought forth in newness of life, we feel Christ to live in us, who being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and always at unity with Himself, His spirit in the hearts of His people leads to an inward exercise for the salvation of mankind ; and under a sense of evil things, there is a travail of spirit, a sorrow and heaviness often experienced, which fills up in some measure that which remains of the afflictions of Christ."

* Henry Luso, thirteenth century.

These pages show him to us as a weeping prophet, as one of those men upon whose foreheads, because they sigh and cry for the abominations that be done upon the earth, God's mark of acceptance is set ; * they show him, too, as one whose heart has been so baptised into the sense of all conditions, † “ that every man's pain did pierce his heart, and every man's grief was grievous to him.” His heart is continually enlarging its borders : it yearns not only over “ the tents of Cushan in affliction,” but takes within it the first dwellers in the land,—

“ The stoics of the wild, the men without a tear ; ”

“ they,” he says, “ who now dwell far back in the wilderness, but whose ancestors were formerly the owners of the land where we dwell, and who for a small consideration, assigned their inheritance to us. I was led to meditate upon their difficulties, and a near sympathy with them was raised in me ; and my heart being enlarged in the love of Christ, I thought that the affectionate care of a good man for his only brother in affliction, does not exceed what I then felt for that people. From this a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, *that I might feel and understand their life, and the spirit they live in*, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they might in any degree

* Ezekiel ix. 4.

† “ I prayed to God,” writes George Fox, “ that He would baptise my spirit into a sense of all conditions among men, so that I might not be a stranger unto the needs and sorrows of any.”

be helped forward by my following the leadings of truth among them."

With this view, in company with a friend, whose spirit is also "fastened" to the undertaking, he sets forth on a religious mission to the Indians on the banks of the Susquehannah, 200 miles from Philadelphia. It is a journey full of danger, as well as hardship, as England and France are at this time at war, and many of the Indian tribes, under French influence, are actively engaged in harassing the English frontier. However, the Son of Peace is with His servant ; he goes and returns in safety. The record he has left us of this journey reminds us in many places of the narratives of the apostolic Eliot and his Moravian successors, men who, in the simple strength of love, feared not to enter into valleys of death and torture, dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty.

Travelling at one time upon a path, " heretofore used by warriors," he observes, " on the sides of large trees, peeled for that purpose, representations of men going to and returning from the wars, and of some being killed in battle ; and as I walked about viewing these Indian histories, which were painted mostly in red or black, and thinking on the innumerable afflictions which the proud, fierce spirit produceth in the world ; also on the toils and fatigues of warriors in travelling over mountains and deserts, on their miseries when far from home, and wounded by their enemies ; of their bruises and great weariness in chasing one another over the

rocks and mountains; of the restless, unquiet mind of those who live in this spirit, and of the hatred which mutually grows up in the minds of their children,—the desire to cherish the spirit of love and peace among this people arose very fresh in me.”

And he is exercised not in behalf of this people only; his desire, he tells us, continually grows “to embrace every opportunity of becoming inwardly acquainted with the hardships and difficulties of my fellow-creatures, and to labour in the love of God for the spreading of pure righteousness on the earth.” During his voyage to England he writes: “My lodging in the steerage hath afforded me sundry opportunities of seeing, hearing, and feeling, with respect to the life and spirit of many poor sailors.” He enters into a sense of their hardships “in having to rise at night to watch four hours on deck, coming down into the steerage soaking wet, where they are so closely stowed that proper change of garments is not easily come at, and where for want of proper room their wet garments are thrown in heaps, and so trodden under foot in going to their lodgings and getting out of them, that it is difficult for each to find his own.” He feelingly regrets that they should so often in the wet and cold “be led to apply to strong drink to supply the want of other convenience.” Great, too, is the sympathising tenderness he feels towards the “poor lads, who are put to the employment of sailors, lest they should be corrupted by the profane examples around them.” “At times,”

he says, " I look at them as though they were my children according to the flesh, and I have had sometimes (on this subject) weighty conversations with the sailors in the steerage, who were mostly respectful to me, and became more so the longer I was with them. They mostly appeared to take kindly what was said to them ; but their minds were so deeply impressed with the almost universal depravity among sailors, that the poor creatures, in their answers to me, have revived in my remembrance that of the degenerate Jews a little before the captivity, as repeated by Jeremiah the prophet, ' There is no hope.' "

But while love so often draws the feet of this pilgrim among the thorns of human suffering and degradation, the perfume of the rose is never far distant, the rose that blossoms among thorns and briers, and will at last lift up its fair head above them all. This lover of the Cross is also an ardent lover of that kingdom whose establishment, whose rewards, Christ Himself connects so plainly with the personal participation in His own labours and sufferings.

" Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations ;

" And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me."

The foundations of this kingdom which is first pure, then peaceable, were deep-sunken in John Woolman's soul ; and his conceptions of its excellence are " exceeding broad," such as belongs to the charity which enlightens as well as warms.

“All true Christians are of the same spirit, but their gifts are diverse. I have been informed that Thomas à Kempis lived and died in the profession of the Roman Catholic religion ; and in reading his writings, I have believed him to be a man of a true Christian spirit, as fully so as many who died martyrs, because they could not join with some superstitions in that Church. John Huss chose to suffer death by fire, rather than act contrary to that which he believed the Lord required of him. Thomas à Kempis, without disputing against the articles then generally agreed to, appears to have laboured by a pious example as well as by preaching and writing, to promote virtue and the inward spiritual religion ; and I believe they were both sincere-hearted followers of Christ. True charity is an excellent virtue, *and to labour sincerely for their good whose belief in all points doth not agree with ours, is a happy state.*”

Once after having been drawn for many days into a deep inward stillness, in which his heart, covered with the spirit of supplication, was secretly poured out before the Lord, near the conclusion of a meeting, “way opened, in the pure flowings of divine love, for me to express what lay upon me, and to show how *deep answers unto deep in the hearts of the sincere and upright*, though in their different growths they may not have attained to the same clearness. In this exercise I was drawn into a sympathising tenderness with the sheep of Christ, however distinguished from one another in

this world ; and I was then led to mention the integrity and constancy of many martyrs who gave their lives for the testimony of Jesus, and yet in some points they held doctrines distinguishable from those which we hold, and to observe that in all ages, where people were faithful to the light and understanding which the Most High afforded them, they found acceptance with Him. Among ourselves also there may be different ways of thinking in some particulars, but if we mutually keep to that spirit and power which crucifies the world, *true unity may be still preserved* ; and if those who are suffering on account of scruples of conscience keep low and humble, and manifest true charity in their lives, it will be more likely to reach the witness in others, and be of more service to the Church, than if their sufferings were attended with a contrary spirit and conduct."

When we compare these words with many which have in various ages of the Church fallen from the lips and pens of men who, in its different communions, have been esteemed gifted, and wise, and faithful, we may surely say—

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood."

The spirit of this plain, unlettered man, was enamoured of the fair ideal which Christianity presents as being the restoration of order and of unity, "the harmony in which mankind and the universe were at first created." He would fain see mercy built up for ever, and righteousness established on earth as it is in the very heavens.

“In holy writ, the Divine Being saith of Himself, ‘I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, said the Lord.’ (Jer. ix. 24.) And if we consider the life of our blessed Saviour when on earth, as it is recorded by His followers, we shall find that one uniform desire for the eternal and temporal good of mankind discovered itself in all His actions. . . . The state in which every motion of a selfish spirit yieldeth to pure love and ardent engagements to promote the happiness of mankind universally, I may with gratitude to the Father of mercies acknowledge is often opened before me as a pearl to dig after. And in meditating on the works of the contrary spirit, and on the desolation it makes among the professors of Christianity, I have often felt a longing in my heart for the exaltation of the peaceable kingdom of Christ, and an engagement to labour according to the gift bestowed on me, for the promoting a humble, plain, temperate way of living; a way in which no unnecessary cares or expenses may encumber our minds or lessen our ability to do good; in which no desires after riches or greatness may lead into hard dealings; no connection with worldly-minded men may abate our love to God, or weaken a true zeal for righteousness. A life wherein we may diligently labour for resignedness to do and to suffer whatever our heavenly Father may allot for us, in reconciling the world to Himself.” . . . “And if,” he exclaims in a deep

insight into the inherent contradiction between the Spirit of Christ and that which "yet worketh," "our Redeemer, for the farther promoting of His most gracious purpose in the earth, should give us to taste of that bitter cup of which His faithful ones have often partaken, oh, that we may be rightly prepared to receive it."

Even while he most ardently desires that the power and excellence of Christ's kingdom may be so known among men that all may see the Redeemer's glory, as he himself beholds it in the sanctuary of his resigned and reconciled spirit, he is too well aware of the yet abiding alienation between man and God, the "enmity" not as yet fully taken away, not to have it often in remembrance, "that people in all ages, *deeply baptised into the nature of that work for which Christ suffered*, have joyfully offered up their liberty and lives for the promoting of it in the earth." And when he meditates on this Divine work "as a work of ages, a work which the prophets felt long before Christ appeared visibly on earth;" and remembers "the bitter agonies He endured when He poured forth His soul unto death, that the heathen nations, as well as others, might come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved," he finds nothing so grievous as the indifference and worldliness which minister cause for the continuation of the sufferings of Christ, by hindering the work of righteousness. He died to establish. So that his spirit is continually though secretly detaching itself

from all such customs as tend, whether directly or indirectly, to impede "that perfect redemption from the spirit of selfishness and oppression, to labour for which is the great business of the whole family of Jesus Christ in this world." The picture of his mind would be incomplete without at least the indication of what these pages constantly bring before us—continually recurring scruples and anxieties, which sometimes seem to weigh even the dust of the earth in a balance, and which we feel must at times have made life a severe thing to the good man whose spirit was exercised by them, sometimes very sorely. Some of these scruples, such as his objections to paying the war and militia taxes, connect themselves with such as are peculiar to the religious community he belonged to, and others are but the workings of a conscientiousness more than ordinarily refined. To this we may attribute the exercise which was long weighty with him, that he should visit some parts of the West Indies on a religious mission, because, as he tells us, "some years ago I retailed rum, molasses, and sugar, the fruits of the labour of slaves, my concern in this matter being at that time less attended to than I now believe it ought to have been; being then less informed respecting the oppressions too generally exercised in these islands, it now seems right that my small gain from this branch of trade should be applied in promoting righteousness in the earth."

Once, too, he tells us, having been joined with

a friend in executing the will of a deceased friend, he became a party to selling a negro youth until he attained the age of thirty (a practice then usual among such persons as scrupled to keep slaves for term of life), and applied the money to the use of the estate; this transaction long afterwards weighs heavily upon him, and his mind for a time is covered with darkness and sorrow. He sees the unrighteousness of having joined to bind "this lad for nine years longer than is common for our own children to serve," and only finds relief in appropriating part of his substance to redeem the last half of the nine years; "and as the time was not yet come, I executed a bond, binding myself or my executors to pay to the man to whom he was sold what to candid men might appear equitable for the last four-and-a-half years of his time."

But other among his scruples, and some of those which wear most the appearance of singularity, are to be traced to that deepened spirituality, which, like an extended natural science, is so continually widening the field of remote, unsuspected affinities, that at last few things stand before it alone or unallied; the grandeur of the whole connects them all, and the sense of great or little almost disappears. The things which bear upon man's spiritual and immortal destinies are not to be appreciated by number or weight or measure; and human life, when viewed under its moral significance, assumes the aspect of one of those grand prophetic visions,

where "the meanest things of every day," the caldron and the hooks, the measuring-rod and the plumb-line, stand in the closest relation to the opened heaven and the glory of the terrible crystal—the throne, and Him that is seated upon it.

"Thinking often," he says, "of customs which have not their foundation in pure wisdom, the use of hats and garments dyed with a dye hurtful to them, grew uneasy to me. Dyes being invented partly to please the eye, and partly to conceal dirt, I have felt their use to be contrary to the sweetness of sincerity, and to that real cleanliness which becometh a holy people.* Through some sorts of dyes, cloth is rendered less useful; and were the damage and expense of dyeing added together, and the cost applied to keeping all sweet and clean, how much more would real cleanliness prevail!"

He tells us how, under the apprehension of being thought singular by beloved friends, he continued in the use of some things contrary to his judgment, and how, after he had provided himself with a hat of

* Journeying in England, he tells us, that travelling in wet weather through narrow streets in towns and villages, where dirtiness under foot and the scent arising from that filth, which more or less infests the air of all thickly settled towns, were disagreeable, and being but weakly, I have felt distress both in body and mind with that which is impure. In these journeys I have been where much cloth hath been dyed, and at sundry times walked over ground where much of their dye-stuff has drained away. *This hath produced a longing in my mind that people might come into cleanness of spirit, cleanness of person, and cleanness about their houses and garments.*

the natural colour of the fur, "in attending meetings its singularity was a trial to me, as at this time white hats were used by some who were fond of following the changeable modes of dress ; and some friends, who knew not from what motives I wore it, grew shy of me, while others thought it savoured of an affected singularity, so that I felt my way for a time shut up in the exercise of the ministry."

We see that "concerns" like this, out of all apparent proportion with the subject they refer to, and the rigidly scrupulous temper they grew out of, must at times have seriously impeded his freedom of action. Once when under a strong religious desire to visit the island of Barbadoes, he cannot feel "clear to take a passage in a vessel employed in the West India trade," connected with slave-grown produce, and finding all vessels thus employed, after a season of deep and protracted perplexity he resigns the project altogether.

So, in coming over to England, he takes his passage in the steerage, and some friends remonstrating with him on the great inconveniences this will expose him to during the voyage, he tells them, "that on the outside of that part of the ship whereon the cabin is, he had observed carved work and imagery, and also, within the cabin, superfluities of workmanship of several sorts, and having in the course of many travels seen the sufferings and oppressions that arise from the vain expense to which conformity with worldly customs leads, he is not clear to apply any extra money to the cost of keeping up

such superfluities." So, too, during his travels in England he abstains from travelling by the stage coaches, because he has heard that the horses are sometimes killed with hard driving, and that post-boys, riding long stages on winter nights, have been frozen to death. Nor would he send letters by the post, because "in the present way of riding, the stages are so fixed, and one boy dependent on another as to time, and going at great speed, that in long, cold, winter nights, the poor boys suffer much."

These are trials which, think of them each of us as he will, it does not seem desirable to omit, because while they help us to understand John Woolman better, they do not surely make us love or respect him less.

Having been long under a religious concern to visit friends in the northern parts of England, and more particularly in Yorkshire, he crosses the seas in 1772, and after a voyage of about a month he lands at Dover, and proceeds to London, where he attends the yearly meeting of ministers and elders, and travelling northwards, assisting at meetings on his way, at Northampton, Birmingham, Nottingham, and many other places of less note, he arrives at Sheffield, and after spending about three months in religious visitations, chiefly, so far as we are guided by his journals, in the counties of Westmoreland and Yorkshire, he arrives at the city of York, to attend the sittings of the quarterly meeting there. But the journeyings, the toils, the anxieties, of this devoted minister of Christ are now nearly over,

his soul's warfare is accomplished, its long travail satisfied. He is soon to depart hence, and to be with One who forgives much in His servants, but forgets nothing, "of their work of faith, their patience of hope, and their labour which proceedeth of love." Before the meeting was over, he was taken ill of small-pox, which proved fatal, and all that was mortal of John Woolman lies in the Friend's burial-ground at York, "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." It was thought by the friends who attended his death-bed, that it would be well to record some of the many lively and comfortable expressions used then by this humble, meek, charitable, and Christ-like man, and the friend at whose house he died, Thomas Priestman, has preserved the following minutes of his sickness and his decease:—

"First-day, the 17th of the Ninth Month, 1772.— His disorder appeared to be the small-pox. Being asked to have a doctor's advice, he signified he had not freedom or liberty in his mind so to do, standing wholly resigned to His will, who gave him life, and whose power he had witnessed to raise and heal him in sickness before, when he seemed nigh unto death; and if he was to wind up now, he was perfectly resigned, having no will either to live or die, and did not chose any should be sent for to him; but a young man, an apothecary, coming of his own accord the next day, and desiring to do something for him, he said he found a freedom to confer with him and the other friends about him, and if any-

thing should be proposed as to medicine, that did not come through defiled channels or oppressive hands, he should be willing to consider and take it, so far as he found freedom.

“*Second-day.*—He said he felt the disorder to affect his head, so that he could think little, and but as a child ; and desired, if his understanding should be more affected, to have nothing given him that those about him knew he had a testimony against.

“*Third-day.*—He uttered the following prayer : ‘O Lord, my God! the amazing horrors of darkness were gathered around me, and covered me all over, and I saw no way to go forth ; I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow-creatures separated from the divine harmony, and it was heavier than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it ; I lifted up my hand, I stretched out my arm, but there was none to help me ; I looked round about, and was amazed. In the depths of misery, O Lord ! *I remembered that Thou art omnipotent ; that I had called Thee Father ;* and I felt that I loved Thee, and I was made quiet in Thy will, and I waited for deliverance from Thee. Thou hadst pity upon me when no man could help me ; I saw that meekness under suffering was showed to us in the most affecting example of Thy Son, and Thou taught me to follow Him, and I said, Thy will, O Father, be done !’

“*Fourth-day, morning.*—Being asked how he felt himself, he meekly answered, ‘I don’t know that

I have slept this night ; I feel the disorder making its progress, but my mind is mercifully preserved in stillness and peace.' Some time after, he said he was sensible that the pains of death must be hard to bear, but if he escaped them now, he must some time pass through them, and he did not know that he could be better prepared, but had no will in it. He said he had settled his outward affairs to his mind, had taken leave of his wife and family as never to return, leaving them to the Divine protection ; adding, ' Though I feel them near to me at this time, yet I freely give them up, having a hope that they will be provided for.' And a little after said, ' This trial is made easier than I could have thought, my will being wholly taken away ; if I was anxious for the event it would have been harder ; but I am not, and my mind enjoys a perfect calm.'

" In the night, a young woman having given him something to drink, he said, ' My child, thou seemest very kind to me, a poor creature ; the Lord will reward thee for it.' Awhile after, he cried out, with great earnestness of spirit, ' Oh, my Father ! my Father !' and soon after he said, ' Oh, my Father ! my Father ! how comfortable art Thou to my soul in this trying season !' Being asked if he could take a little nourishment, after some pause, he replied, ' My child, I cannot tell what to say to it ; I seem nearly arrived where my soul shall have rest from all its troubles.' After giving in something to be inserted in his journal,

he said, 'I believe the Lord will now excuse me from exercises of this kind ; and I see no work but one, which is to be the last wrought by me in this world ; the messenger will come that will release me from all these troubles, but it must be in the Lord's time, which I am waiting for.' He said he had laboured to do whatever was required, according to the ability received ; in the remembrance of which he had peace : and though the disorder was strong at times, and would like a whirlwind come over his mind, yet it had hitherto been kept steady, and centred in everlasting love ; adding, 'And if that be mercifully continued, I ask and desire no more.' Another time, he said he had long had a view of visiting this nation, and sometime before he came, had a dream, in which he saw himself in the northern parts of it, and that the spring of the gospel was opened in him much as it was in the beginning of the work among Friends, as in the times of George Fox and William Dewsbury, and he saw the different states of the people, as clear as he had ever seen flowers in a garden ; but in his going along he was suddenly stopped, though he could not see for what end ; but looking towards home, fell into a flood of tears, which waked him.

"At another time, he said, 'My draught seemed strongest towards the north, and I mentioned in my own monthly meeting, that attending the quarterly meeting at York, and being there, looked like home to me.'

“ *Fifth-day, night.*—Having repeatedly consented to take medicine with a view to settle his stomach, but without effect; the friend then waiting on him said through distress, ‘What shall I do now?’ He answered, with great composure, ‘Rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks;’ but added a little after, ‘This is sometimes hard to come at.’

“On Sixth-day morning, he broke forth early in supplication on this wise: ‘O Lord, it was Thy power that enabled me to forsake sin in my youth, and I have felt Thy bruises for disobedience; but as I bowed under them Thou healedst me, continuing a Father and a Friend; I feel Thy power now, and I beg that in the approaching trying moment, Thou wilt keep my heart steadfast unto Thee.’ On his giving directions to a friend concerning some little things, she said, ‘I will take care, but hope thou wilt live to order them thyself.’ He replied, ‘My hope is in Christ; and though I may seem a little better, a change in the disorder may soon happen, and my little strength be dissolved, and if it so happen, I shall be gathered to my everlasting rest.’ On her saying she did not doubt that, but could not help mourning to see so many faithful servants removed at so low a time, he said, ‘All good cometh from the Lord, whose power is the same, and He can work as He sees best.’ The same day he had given directions about wrapping his corpse; perceiving a friend to weep, he said, ‘I would rather thou wouldest guard against weeping for me,

my sister; I sorrow not, though I have had some painful conflicts, but now they seem over, and matters well settled, and I look at the face of my dear Redeemer, for sweet is His voice, and His countenance is comely.'

"*First-day, 4th of Tenth Month.*—Being very weak, and in-general difficult to be understood, he uttered a few words in commemoration of the Lord's goodness; and added, 'How tenderly have I been waited on in this time of affliction, in which I may say, in Job's words, "Tedious days and wearisome nights are appointed to me;" and how many are spending their time and money in vanity and superfluities, while thousands and tens of thousands want the necessaries of life, who might be relieved by them, and their distresses, at such a time as this, in some degree softened by the administering of suitable things.'

"*Second-day, morning.*—The apothecary, who appeared very anxious to assist him, being present, he questioned as to the probability of such a load of matter being thrown off his weak body; and the apothecary making some remarks, implying he thought it might, he spoke with an audible voice on this wise: 'My dependence is on the Lord Jesus, who I trust will forgive my sins, which is all I hope for; and, if it be His will to raise up this body again, I am content; and if to die, I am resigned; but if thou canst not be easy without trying to assist nature, I submit.' After which, his throat was so much affected, that it was very difficult for

him to speak so as to be understood, and he frequently wrote when he wanted anything. About the second hour on Fourth-day morning, he asked for pen and ink, and at several times, with much difficulty, wrote thus : ‘I believe my being here is in the wisdom of Christ ; I know not as to life or death.’

“About a quarter before six, the same morning he seemed to fall into an easy sleep, which continued about half-an-hour, when, seeming to awake, he breathed a few times with more difficulty, and expired without sigh, groan, or struggle.”

“The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”

“ It is not blessedness to know that thou thyself art bless’d,
True joy was never yet by one, nor yet by two, possess’d.

“ *Nor to the many is it given, but only to the all,
The joy that leaves one heart unblest’d would be for mine too
small ;*

“ For when my spirit most was bless’d, to know another
griev’d
Would take away the joy from all that I myself received.

“ Nor would I seek to blunt that pain, forgetting others’ woe ;
From knowledge, not from want of thought, true blessed-
ness must grow.

“ For blessedness I find this earth of ours is then no place,
Where still the happiest man must meet his brother’s griev-
ing face.

“ And only in one thought I find a joy I never miss,
In faith to know all grief below will grow to final bliss.

“ And he who holds this faith will strive with firm and ardent
soul,
To work out his own proper good in working for the whole.

“ God only sees this perfect good, the way to it is dim ;
God only then is truly blest, man only blest in Him.”

Rückert’s Wisdom of the Brahmins.



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